Sir, there are three or four vacancies in the UPSC as on date. The vacancies are there and I would like to know the break-up from the Government of India. How many backward class persons have been appointed so far in the UPSC? Sir, the backward classes are the neglected classes though 55 per cent population is there in this country. Even 27 per cent reservation has been brought by the previous Government which was implemented by the Congress Government. Today, the situation is, whether it is appointment or recruitment of people, it has been totally flouted and the person who has come in merit category has been shown against the quota of reservation. This is the injustice being done to the backward classes. I gave a letter to the hon. Minister asking him whether Government will give an assurance in appointments. I would like to know whether these two vacancies will be filled up from the backward classes.

SHRI S.R. BALASUBRAMONIYAN: Mr. Chairman, the hon. Member is not right. There are no four vacancies. There are only two vacancies. They have to be filled up shortly. Regarding the suggestions that he has made one or two suggestions he has given - I have accepted them. They have to be implemented by the Prime Minister shortly.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: What about the appointment of a Parliamentary Committee for Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes? I have been requesting the Prime Minister to respond favourably.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Question Hour is over.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: The Chairman has to say that, not you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is still half a minute. Mr Shinde. I am sorry, Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

*404. SHRI MOHINDER SINGH KALYAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention have been drawn to the newsitem published in the Tribune, dated the 5th November, 1996 under the caption "LPG shortage in Ludhiana";

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) what is Government's reaction thereto; and

(d) the steps being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The news item refers to the shortage of LPG supplies, black-marketing and delivery of refills after 21 days. Due to shut-down of Mathura Refinery during the month of September and October, 1996, and slippage in arrival of imports, bulk LPG supplies to bottling plants at Karnal and Jalandhar were affected resulting in delayed refill deliveries to the consumers during the said period in Ludhiana Market.

On account of various steps taken by Oil Industry during the period to tackle the problem of backlog in certain markets, the supplies have since been normalised in Ludhiana Market. The refill delivery to the consumers after 21 days of the previous supplies has been introduced as a step to meet the genuine requirement of all consumers and to prevent diversion of domestic LPG for unauthorised uses. A cylinder normally stays for 30 days in a normal household. Apart from other steps to control temporary backlogs that may arise, Government has also constituted a Task Force to monitor the supply of LPG on day to day basis during the present peak demand of winter.

(d) To increase the availability of LPG in the country, the indigenous production of LPG is planned to be increased by expanding the capacity of the existing refineries and fractionators as well as by setting up new refineries and fractionators. Further, the import capacity of LPG has been increased by setting up new LPG import facilities at Mangalore and Kandla by Public Sector Oil Companies. From 1993 onwards, Govt. has also allowed private parties to import LPG and sell it to the consumers at market determined prices to increase the availability of LPG.